

# Teaching Baptism with Stories

“God’s love is communicated to infants and young children primarily through parents.’ Parents have shared the gift of human life with their children and, through Baptism, have enriched them with a share in God’s own life. They have the duty to nourish it. Their faith, their attitude toward other human beings, and their trust in a loving God strongly influence the development of the child’s faith. Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents...Children ordinarily enjoy listening to their parents read to them and tell them stories. Reading stories from Sacred Scripture combines both these simple activities. Just as children learn their family histories through stories told by their parents, they learn about the Catholic faith as their parents introduce them to the person of Jesus and the beauty of the word of God and tell them the story of Mary, the Mother of God, as well as of the lives of the saints.”

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## **Noah and the Flood (Genesis 6-9)**

- The waters of Baptism are a new greater flood. As the flood wiped out sin from the earth, so Baptism washes sin from the soul of the baptized.
- As Noah’s family passed through waters of death to a new life, so in the waters of Baptism the Christian is buried with Christ, dying to sin, and rises with him to new life.
- In the flood the same water both destroyed the bad and restored the good, so in Baptism the same water both destroys sin and gives divine life.

## **Moses and the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15-15:21)**

- Just as the Israelites were finally free of slavery by passing through the water, baptism frees us of the “slavery” of sin.
- As Pharaoh and his army were defeated in the waters of the Red Sea, so the devil is defeated in the waters of Baptism.
- As the Israelites passed through the waters of death to a new life, so in the waters of Baptism the Christian is buried with Christ, dying to sin, and rises with him to new life.
- Just as the Israelites left Egypt behind, the baptized leave the world of sin behind.
- The Israelites sang a song of triumph and thanksgiving when they got to the other side of the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army was destroyed. The baptized should constantly thank God for forgiving them and giving them the gift of divine life!

## **The Healing of Naaman the Leper (2 Kings 5:1-14)**

- As Naaman was cured by washing in the Jordan river, so the baptized is cured in the waters of Baptism.
- Just like God, by his grace, used ordinary water to heal Naaman’s leprosy, God uses ordinary water to heal us of our sin. (The water isn’t powerful on its own!)
- After coming up from the water Naaman’s skin is described as being “like the flesh of a little child” – so too in Baptism we are born again, and made adopted children of God.
- Just as Naaman had to trust and obey Elisha, the baptized (or the parents on behalf of a baptized baby) must approach the sacrament with faith and obedience.

## **The Healing of the Man Born Blind (John 9)**

- Just as the man was blind due to no fault of his own, so all humans are born under the curse of Sin.
- Just as Jesus forms new eyes for the blind man using clay from the ground (which was what God made Adam from!), the baptized is re-created as a “new creature” and made an adopted child of God.
- Just as the blind man is given his sight by washing in the pool, the baptized is now able to see with the eyes of faith.
- Jesus used dirt and water to heal the blind man – Jesus continues to use material things (water, oil, bread and wine) to heal and strengthen our souls through the sacraments.

## The Healing of Eustace (Excerpt from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C.S. Lewis):

“Well last night I was more miserable than ever. And that beastly arm-ring was hurting like anything. I looked up and saw the last thing I expected: a huge lion coming toward me. And one queer thing was that there was no moon last night, but there was moonlight where the lion was. So it came nearer and nearer. I was terribly afraid of it. You may think that, being a dragon, I could have knocked any lion out easily enough. But it wasn't that kind of fear. I wasn't afraid of it eating me, I was just afraid of it - if you can understand. Well, it came up close to me and looked straight into my eyes. And I shut my eyes tight. But that wasn't any good because it told me to follow it.

And I knew I'd have to do what it told me, so I got up and followed it. And it led me a long way into the mountains. And there was always this moonlight over and round the lion wherever we went. So at last we came to the top of this mountain...and there was a garden - trees and fruit and everything. In the middle of it was a well.

It was bigger than most wells, like a very big round bath with marble steps going down into it. The water was as clear as anything and I thought if I could get in there and bathe it would ease the pain in my leg. But the lion told me I must undress first.

I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't any clothes on when I suddenly thought that dragons are snaky sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Oh, of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place. And then I scratched a little deeper and, instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully, as if I was a banana. In a minute or two I just stepped out of it. I could see it lying there beside me, looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bath.

But just as I was going to put my feet into the water I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly just as they had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I, it only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one, and I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again and this underskin peeled off beautifully and out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bath.

Well, exactly the same thing happened again. And I thought to myself, oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off? For I was longing to bathe my leg. So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it. But as soon as I looked at myself in the water I knew it had been no good.

Then the lion said - 'You will have to let me undress you.' I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know- if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place. It sure hurts but it is such fun to see it coming away.

Well he peeled the beastly stuff right off - just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times, only they hadn't hurt - and there it was lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker and more knobbly looking than the others had been. And there was I as smooth and soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me - I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I'd no skin on - and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I'd turned into a boy again.

After a bit of time the lion took me out and dressed me - in new clothes.”



### Important Points:

- Sin changed humanity (like Eustace was changed into a Dragon) – Baptism restores us.
- We can't save ourselves. God is the one who saves us in Baptism, and dresses us in new clothes.
- Eustace had to trust Aslan (faith) in order to be healed. Baptism also requires an act of faith.